

## Key Programs Secured by Baird for Water Resources Development and Conservation Passes Senate; Urges President Not to Veto Legislation Containing Funding for Critical Programs to Prevent Flood Control, Land Erosion, and Provide Harbor Maintenance

Washington, D.C. - Earlier this year, in his role as a conferee for the Water Resources and Development Act (WRDA), Congressman Brian Baird (WA-03) was able to secure funding for critical infrastructure projects addressing erosion prevention, harbor maintenance, predation of endangered salmon and steelhead, and permit streamlining that will benefit Southwest Washingtonians. Last evening the Senate passed the conference report, which reconciles different versions of WRDA that passed the House on April 19 and the Senate on May 16. It now moves to the President for his signature; however, the President has stated he would veto the legislation.

"If the President does in fact veto this legislation, he will be ending funding for programs that increase job opportunities, increase economic development in our communities, promote public safety, and protect our local environment," said Congressman Baird. "I urge the President to sign this bill so that our communities can help projects move forward that boost our local economy; implement flood control measures that are crucial for public safety; and, addresses water resources and conservation, while investing in the future of Southwest Washington and our country."

The projects Congressman Baird secured include:

### Extension of Section 214:

An extension of the Section 214 provision that allows public entities, like ports and cities, to expedite the Corps' permitting process. Section 214 of the 2000 WRDA bill was set to expire on December 31, 2008; Congressman Baird worked to get this extended to 2009. Without this extension, the Corps' permitting backlog would increase significantly, causing serious delays for critical projects.

### Port of Ilwaco, Baker Bay:

Navigation improvements built by the Corps during the past several decades have diverted the flow of the Columbia River away from Baker Bay to Ilwaco. This has resulted in increased siltation in Baker Bay and Ilwaco Harbor that requires frequent dredging. Congressman Baird secured a provision to allow the Port of Ilwaco to conduct a study to determine the cause of this problem.

### Puget Island Erosion Control:

Homes and property on Puget Island, located in the middle of the Columbia River, are being threatened by severe erosion problems caused by increased maritime traffic. Historically, dredged material was placed along the shoreline of Puget Island about every 10 years, with the last placement occurring in 1987.

Due in part to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) designation of critical habitat for Endangered Species Act listed species, dredged material is no longer placed in this area. However, NMFS now may allow for periodic infrequent disposal.

Following discussions and meetings with island residents, local officials, boat pilots, and the Corps, Congressman Baird was able to include language in WRDA that would provide for placement of dredged material along permitted portions of Puget Island to protect against erosion to existing economic and environmental resources.

#### Hamilton Island Campground (Strawberry Island):

The Corps of Engineers at Bonneville Lock and Dam proposes to build a 100 site, Class A, accessible campground, at the western tip of Hamilton Island, Skamania County. There are no other Corps operated campgrounds in the state of Washington along the Columbia River, from Dallesport to the Pacific Ocean, a distance of 185 miles.

The provision Congressman Baird secured will enable the construction of the Hamilton Island Campground, located within the Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area (CRGNSA), which will house shower facilities, flush toilets, security lighting, entrance station, dump station, and other amenities.

#### Shoalwater Bay:

The Shoalwater Bay Indian Tribe continues to live on a small federally recognized reservation on the coast of Washington state. Over recent decades the Tribe has lost lands and subsistence habitat due to erosion, including intertidal habitat which is included within the defined reservation boundaries. The Tribe received Congressional assistance by the authorization of a coastal erosion protection project identified in Section 545 of WRDA 2000.

Section 545 provided for a technical study to evaluate, analyze, and ultimately define the cause and most appropriate solution to the erosion problem, followed by a construction project conditioned on the study results. The technical report is now being completed by Seattle District and firmly establishes a feasible project.

Congressman Baird included language to ensure ongoing Congressional support of the project as intended, establishing the need for essential ecological habitat restoration as a project purpose.

#### Avian Predation:

The prevalence of Caspian terns in the Columbia River estuary has led to increased predation of threatened and endangered Columbia River salmon and steelhead. It has been estimated that Caspian terns consume approximately 10 to 19 percent of the annual out-migrating population of juvenile salmonids originating from the Columbia Basin.

In January 2006, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Corps of Engineers, and NOAA Fisheries completed the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Caspian tern management to reduce the number of young salmon eaten by terns in the Columbia River estuary. The plan calls for redistributing the world's largest breeding colony of Caspian terns over a wider area and decreasing their numbers on East Sand Island near the mouth of the Columbia River. Aimed at reducing the number of young salmon eaten by terns, the plan also will benefit the terns by dispersing a large breeding concentration where the population is vulnerable to disease, human disturbance, predation and storms.

Congressman Baird secured an increase in funding to reduce avian predation of juvenile salmonids from \$1 million to \$10 million.

#### Centralia Flood Control Projects:

Twice in the last 11 years, Interstate I-5 and the north-south railway have closed for three days at a time due to flooding, at a cost of more than \$50 million a day. The Flood Control Project aims to solve chronic flooding problems in the Chehalis River Basin. The Project also provides state and local partnerships the support they need to continue their efforts to provide a solution to this life-threatening and expensive problem.

Senators Murray and Cantwell and Congressman Norm Dicks were instrumental in securing the funding.

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